

Convicted rapist seeks to avoid registration; says he's a changed man

Admitted serial rapist says he's a changed man; court will decide Friday whether he will be labeled as sex offender

By ADAM LYNN

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Convicted rapist Donald Lee Giffin says he's a changed man.

Giffin, 62, is employed, sober, in a committed relationship with his wife of 11 years and hasn't been arrested or charged with a crime since 1982, when he was convicted of two counts of first-degree rape.

"I have become a good man," Giffin wrote in documents filed in Pierce County Superior Court in December.

But has he changed enough to be relieved of the requirement of registering as a sex offender, reporting to a community corrections officer once a quarter and undergoing an annual polygraph examination?

That will be the question before Judge Garold Johnson on Friday.

Giffin thinks he deserves a chance, as does his lawyer, Rob Freeby.

"How long to you have to wear the scarlet letter?" Freeby asked Tuesday.

But prosecutors are arguing against it.

Deputy prosecutor Malika Johnson acknowledged therapists who have examined Giffin in the past decade have concluded he poses minimal risk to community safety.

But the deputy prosecutor pointed out in court pleadings that the judge who sentenced Giffin to two life sentences, which he then suspended on the condition Giffin successfully complete sexual deviancy treatment, insisted Giffin remain on lifelong supervision.

"... The court determined that given the heinous nature of the crimes committed by the defendant and the fact that he had subjected his victims to a life sentence, he too should remain on supervision," Malika Johnson wrote in court pleadings. "Supervision ensures the safety of the community and continued accountability for his crimes."

Giffin was the prime suspect during a reign of terror in Pierce County in the late 1970s and early 1980s, court records show. He was convicted of two rapes but admitted to more than 20 others.

He generally attacked single women home alone, often kicking in doors and punching the women repeatedly in the head before raping them, the records state. On at least one occasion, the young child of one of his victims was in the room while her mother was raped.

Facing the possibility of multiple counts of rape, Giffin pleaded guilty to two. As required by law at the time, Judge Gary Steiner ordered Giffin sent to Western State Hospital to be evaluated. Doctors there diagnosed him as being a sexual psychopath.

That triggered another law in effect at the time. Steiner, now retired, sentenced Giffin to two life terms in prison but suspended them and sent Giffin back to the mental hospital in Lakewood for sexual deviancy treatment.

“Everyone involved with the defendant agreed that he was a violent and dangerous rapist; nonetheless treatment, rather than punishment, was at the time the favored approach in dealing with sexual psychopaths,” Malika Johnson wrote.

Giffin spent close to six years in treatment at Western State before being released into the community, first on work release and later under the supervision of a community corrections officer. He continued outpatient treatment for more than a decade after his release, the records show.

He also obtained employment and remains working today.

“He did well in sex offender treatment, and he appears to have internalized the lessons he has learned,” Vincent Gollogly, a licensed psychologist and certified sex offender treatment provider, wrote in a report submitted to the court in December. “He developed a good understanding of the impact of the severe and long-term damage he inflicted upon his victims and their families, and he has worked hard to ensure that nothing like this will ever occur again.”

Giffin, who never served any prison time, swore out a five-page affidavit that was submitted with his pleadings. In it, he accepts responsibility for his past actions and the pain he caused many people. Giffin said he is “deeply and sincerely sorry and ashamed for what I did.”

“In closing, I must acknowledge during the first 30 years of my life I was terribly out of control, and I caused an enormous amount of pain to a lot of people,” Giffin said. “Today, I can confidently state I am no longer that same person. I have made immense changes to my morals, values, beliefs and core behaviors.”

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